

What kind of sound processor are you?

The educational community has come to recognize that there are many learning styles, some inherent and some acquired. Using methods attuned to those styles produces great results in learners who have been told they are deficient in some way. For example, people who process digital and visual information (sheet music) are highly prized in classical music performance, which is what many of us were trained to emulate as kids. Not all of us, however, are digital-visual processors. Maybe we were playing uncomfortably in somebody else's preferred style all along, or stopped trying to play at all.

Why is this relevant? On one hand, thinking about what kind of learner you are can pinpoint your talents and allow you finally to play to your strengths. On the other hand, thinking about other learning styles can open up possibilities for you. If you feel stuck playing in one style, you can find an alternative style and develop your skills in that area.

Here's a stab at a typology of styles based solely on my observations:

AA--Analog aural: plays best "from the heart," responds to sound tone, vibration, and expression

AD--Digital aural: plays best from imitating a tune, by memory, or "by ear"; seems to have innate rhythm and/or pitch

DV--Digital visual: plays best from sheet music or tablature; responds to metronomes and/or notation

AV--Analog visual: plays best using other's body cues (as in a band) or a computer display; responds to waveforms, icons, music-generating programs and simulation devices

Soon, with new communication technologies, I suspect the Analog-Visual type will become the preferred standard.

As for me, I am a natural AD. I like to approximate memorized tunes by ear, play to backing tracks, and accompany others. Although I started with AA techniques, playing full-on AA is still a challenge for me, but it's fun and liberating. I have a few basic DV skills (I can read simple music, but I still have to hear someone play the song to learn it well). Finally, I'm starting to learn how to use AV techniques such as electronic enhancements and music processors, but I don't record as comfortably as I play.

So with all that in mind, what kind of sound processor are you?